Application of Continuous Learning Management (CLM) to Retain Knowledge in Saudi Organizations

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Abstract Organizations today are striving to achieve success and growth by applying various techniques and methods. These methods allow them to have and success and gain profit. Among these techniques and methods, the concept of learning organizations has gained popularity in the last few decades. The concept of learning organization is not a new one but the organizations of today have started to adopt this concept widely because of its progressive and beneficial nature. Continuous Learning Management (CLM) refers to one of the models that can be applied in organizations which practice learning processes. The focus of this paper is on Saudi organizations and how they are adopting positive changes with the help of learning processes and CLM model collectively.
Keywords: CLM, Organizational Development, Continuous Learning, Saudi Organizations and Training Sessions

1. Introduction

Learning of new methods to grow a company is becoming one of the prime concern of every industry. Recently the concept of learning has gained popularity in industrial sector. Different companies are working hard on their learning processes so that they can compete with the continuously changing advanced technologies. The process of learning has deemed important by organizations in order to continue the phenomenon of growth, success and survival within their respective industries [6]. This scenario has developed a direct relationship between organizational performance and organizational learning. In the past, this relationship was not treated with significance because organizational performance was treated as the product of past with no link with the learning processes of present [2]. But today organizations have realized that there is an evident collaboration between the learning process and performance of an organization.

Along with the different organizations all around the world, organizations of Saudi Arabia also noticed the shift of industry towards the learning procedures, required to achieve success and growth. Saudi Arabia is known all around the world for having vast reserves of natural resources and acting as a key host of international businesses extensively [12]. However Saudi Arabia did not have a structured management for organizations due to the ignorance of importance of learning new technological advancements. But in recent years different Saudi organizations have been introducing the concept of continuous learning of management because of its ever rising scope and promising nature regarding positive growth and success.

1.1 Continuous Learning Management

According to Van Breda-Verduijn and Heijboer (2016) continuous learning management refers to the process of developing skills continuously [21]. These skills may include different abilities such as management and enhancing knowledge. An organization is said to practice CLM when it introduces the culture of continuous learning among the employees. It is an indifferent approach under which an organization influence its employees to keep learning about corporate expectations, resources and culture for the growth of an organization. With the application of CLM model, an organization enables itself to learn about the resources, their proper allocation and how to operate more effectively.

1.2 Theoretical Base for CLM
The procedure of obtaining knowledge requires an organization to adopt a learning model so that the organization can preserve knowledge. As per British Columbia (BC Public Service Agency) (2012) there are various factors involved that are responsible for the need of retaining knowledge within an organization [3]. In order to identify whether an organization is a learning organization or not, these factors are to be identified. The first theory regarding the idea that different business organizations are capable of adopting learning models was presented decades ago. Although the idea was captivating but there no theoretical basis was provided to prove the significance of this idea. Years later the idea of learning organization was modified and today different researchers such as Jain and Martindale (2012) and Farrukh and Waheed (2015) pointed out those factors and characteristics that are responsible for turning a simple organization into learning organization [11, 8].

Increase of obligations towards business, limited budgets, requirements to apply different workforces, demographical changes, limited ability to attend classroom style courses, increasing need to be aware of public demands and desire to develop a culture of better performance among the employees are those factors that push an organization to adopt learning phenomenon. The CLM model enables an organization to adopt the learning process so that the organization can keep up with the changes occurring with respect to technology and industry [11]. Application of CLM provides an organization with ability of having increased opportunities of coaching for supervisors while playing an important in transforming the growth process of an organization. The model brings out creativity and innovation within organization which are the core elements to achieve business goals and objectives while maintaining competition with rival organizations in industry. The model of CLM involves more than learning procedures, it involves both formal and informal ways of educating staff within the organization.

1.3 Learning Principles: Criteria for a Learning Organization
To quote the criteria of learning principles of an organization, it is important to know that corporate learning is different from regular learning processes because it is informal and it is not associated or owned by HR of that organization. The learning procedure takes place at every level of an organization including the HR department. The key to learning in a corporate sector is to practice because employees have better chance of learning in the field instead of taking trainings and other learning courses [17]. An organization should create and support such environment that promotes learning while employees are on duty.

Different studies shows that organizations who adopt informal ways of learning outplay those organizations who adopt formal ways of learning. Informal learning procedures refer to those experiences of employees, which they learn during their job. Whereas formal learning procedures include tools to support individual performance, trainings and coaching. Those organizations who opt for adopting informal learning procedures also have training team but the team does not engage staff into taking different training and coaching sessions [4]. Instead, the training team is assigned to design such patterns and content that can aid the employees into learning fast from their jobs. It is a convenient way to help those who find difficulty in following CLM model.
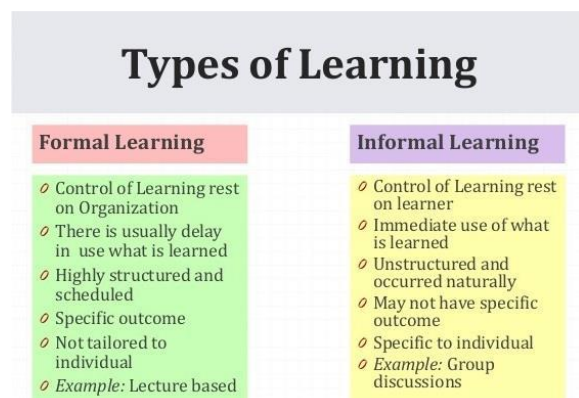
Figure 1: Types of Learning (Source:
www.organizationalbehaviour.com)

Figure 2: Stages of Organizational Learning (Source:
www.lmmiller.com/build-lean-system-
organizational-learning)

The workforce within organizations is being improved as compared to past years. Saudi organizations have learnt to put their employees within the specified area of their expertise rather than putting them blindly in management. Putting employees in their own area of expertise helps in growing the organization faster because the employees strive to provide organization with the best of their capabilities. The talented employees belonging to the fields of sale, engineering, manufacturing and designing do not work in management [14]. These employees work in their respective fields to play their part in bringing success within the organization.

Many of the organizations reward their employees according to the level of their expertise. Those employees who achieve higher targets are presented with higher rewards. This is one of the motivational tactics used in the model of CLM to encourage employees for working with the best of their capabilities. Giving the staff career progression helps them in improving their learning skills. Organizations usually promote and publicize the promotion of employees to boost their confidence and telling the employees that they are important for the company and the company is willing to invest in their skills [2]. It positively effects the learning procedures within the working staff of an organization.

The learning criteria of an organization is further divided into the following:

1.3.1 Participation
It is imperative for a learning organization to hire those individuals who have the capability of improving themselves and they are willing to continue the process of learning so that their existing skills can be further polished [17]. To simply put it an organization that seeks to improve continuously look for those people who are willing to improve continuously. But improvement cannot be achieved without participation. Most of the organizations require their employees to participate in those programs that are specifically designed to improve the learning process. While a large number of organizations in Saudi Arabia have the training staff dedicated learning, training and professional development of staff, all of these efforts made by organizations will not work unless the employees are willing to participate in such programs. Therefore, participation is the prime concern of any organization that is willing to adopt a CLM model.

1.3.2 Repetition
According to a cognitive research in psychology, repetition is deemed as a key mechanism which is responsible for building of non-declarative knowledge. This non-declarative knowledge refers to the repetition of skills and habits [15]. These socio-cognitive approaches suggest that an organization's learning process is based on the modifications in an individual's knowledge. These modifications take place when a process or procedure is followed repeatedly. Repetition is directly linked with the cognitive system because of its refining nature

regarding the skills of an individual. It is important to understand the importance of repetition in relation to mechanism of a learning organization because it plays a significant role in a learning organization.

1.3.3 Relevance

Learning process do not refer to initiate the process without pointing out the area of expertise of an individual. To ensure the positive outcomes from a learning organization, the learning must be relevant. The process of learning should be in balance with the job requirements' of a learner. Otherwise there is no point giving knowledge to a sales person about the technicalities involved in operating machineries. A sales person can only benefit from those programs which are related to his field. All those factors that are involved in learning process are supposed to be relevant with the working environment of an individual [15]. Giving the employees training about such equipments and technologies which are not used by them will be the waste of an organization's resources and it will also have a negative effect over an organization's performance instead of having a positive effect.

1.3.4 Transference

Transference is important for a learning organization as it lets the management know that how much of the learning is being put into practice by employees. The tool of transference helps in identifying those factors that are preventing the learning efforts from being successful. Identification of such factors will help in eliminating them so that the learning can be implemented flawlessly. According to Van Breda et al., (2016) the process of learning alone is not sufficient enough to determine whether an organization is learning organization or not [21]. Transference identifies the learning organization by overviewing whether the training given to individuals is being practiced by them during their jobs.

1.3.5 Feedback

Feedback is a way of treating underperformance effectively. The learning organizations promote feedback because it is a constructive way of letting employees know if they need improvement or if their work is remarkable. It is suitable for both, constructive improvement of an individual as well as to motivate exceptional working capacity of individuals. The complexity of an organization often effects the employees into working under pressure. The pressure of working and giving the best performance often results in doing things wrong way

[8]. Instead of highlighting the mistakes and setbacks of employees, it is suitable for a company to give them feedback regarding their work. This way giving feedback can play an important role in enhancing the process of learning. If employees are given feedback regarding their work, it will increase the pace of their learning.
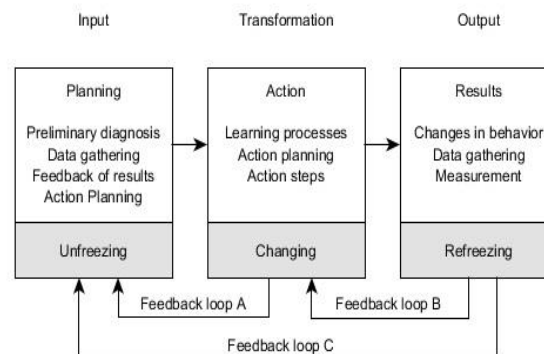
Figure 3: Feedback within an Organization (Source: www.iveybusinessjournal.com)

1.4 Inference for Learning Organizations

Learning organization has the capability to create its own future because of adopting continuous learning process. The learning process enables an organization to bring creativity not only within the work of its employees but also at the collective level. Such organizations have capacity to adopt changes according to the prevailing needs of people working within and outside of organization. The goal of being a learning organization is not achieved in a single step. It is gained by following a number of guideline and set of rules whose application ensures that the company will progress positively [19]. These rules and guidelines are not to be followed by the employees only at individual level but the set of rules is adopted by the whole organization so that the aspired goals can be achieved.

The concept of learning organization is more than compiling knowledge. As far as the concern relies upon obtaining knowledge, it is obvious that every organization creates and uses knowledge in its own way. Some of the organizations fail to manage and apply the obtained knowledge appropriately to gain maximum profit out of it. The tools of applying collected knowledge as needed turns an ordinary organization into learning organization. Not every learning organization follow the same strategies and

tactics but most of these organizations have the above mentioned elements in common.

The application of these elements can help an organization in adopting the CLM model so that the organization can be changed into learning organization [18]. A thorough overview of literature that involves the basics must be focused to develop a model of continuous learning management. The application of this model will help organization in changing the work-related behavior of their employees and it can also the lead the individual to have a permanent change while working. There are two basic principles that can be followed to organize an ideal model of continuous learning management. The two principles related to CLM are divided into two learning processes. Both learning processes are briefly discussed below:

1.4.1 Learning Process 1: Training and Development
The corporate world is changing at an increasing speed. Introduction of new technologies have totally changed the ways of operation in organizations. The fast changing world demands from organizations to move at equally face pace if they want to be successful. Training and development is one of the crucial parts of corporate world which is inseparable from an organization. While it is the most important part, it is often given less priority and attention in numerous organizations. The process of training and development is associated with the human resources of an organization [9]. Proper training and development sessions are of utmost importance for providing the employees with the techniques on how they can sharpen their existing skills, develop new skills and continue the process of learning. Designing the training and development programs is important because they help in continue the process of learning at collective and individual level. The first learning process is divided into the following:
1. Training design, implementation and evaluation
2. Training effectiveness

1.4.1.1 Training Design, Implementation and Evaluation
A training's design is dependent upon those learning principles which are related to literature, individual behavior, memories of individuals, cognitive systems within the organization and contribution of an individual towards the learning process of organization [16] All of these factors should be focused while designing a training and development program. Collectively these factors help in identifying the needs of a training program.

Monitoring these factors closely help in modelling a training according to the needs of employees. In order to address the prevailing needs, it is important to first identify those needs. The identification of needs can be done by applying numerous tactics. Three of the major tactics are taking the overall business perspective into consideration that is based on the vision and mission of organization, setting tasks to achieve the business goals and taking accident rate, labor turnovers and working conditions of employees into consideration. With the application of these tactics, the needs of trainings can be easily identifies and then trainings can be designed in accordance with those specified needs. The basic concept of training and development programs are correlated with the success and growth of an organization [16]. A successful training session automatically evaluates the short term and long term benefits of a company.

1.4.1.2 Training effectiveness
All the training and development programs are considered useless by organizations unless they are effective and employees benefit from them. The notion that whether employees benefited from training and development session can only be evaluated if employees start exercising what they learnt during their jobs. Every organization spends a fortune over different learning and training programs, this is why the effectiveness of such programs is one of the grave concerns any organization [10]. In various cases, the training sessions do not provide the organizations with expected outcomes, the conducted training are not effective and they fail to provide the organization with the desired targets. With the application of CLM model, those elements which prevent training sessions from becoming effective and successful can be identified. Later on those elements can be addressed by applying one of the strategies discussed above to ensure that a training and development sessions give organization the expected outcomes.

1.4.2 Learning Process 2: Management Development
The second learning process involves management development. The management development direct contributes towards the progress of an organization by keeping an overview of the present and future needs of an organizations. It not only keeps tabs on the needs of organization but it also helps in understanding and addressing those needs [9]. The concept of management development is concerned to

educate middle managers according to their skills so that they can help in pursuing the goals of their respective organizations. It strives to create understanding on the managerial level regarding the importance of learning organization.

1.4.2.1 Objectives of Management Development
Management development aims at ensuring that managers are well aware about what is expected from them in terms of performance and working capacity. It is responsible for making the managers understand those parameters according to which their working capabilities will be measured. The focus of management development is on managers because if managers will carry out their duties with utmost responsibility, the employees will also work with responsibility [14]. Mangers also require training and development sessions and to identify the needs of mangers, the strategies which involve management development are applied. Such training programs identify the area of expertise of a manger and those areas in which a manager lacks.
The lack in performing capabilities of a manager can be worked upon by applying the CLM model. The structure of management development overviews management succession to improve the progressing pace of an organization [20]. Those abilities which are untapped can be brought out by giving the training of management development. Furthermore, the management development of CLM model assist an organization in making appropriate decisions at the right time. Accurate decision which are not made at the given time are likely to harm the organization in one or another way. This is why the need to make right decision about organization at the right time is important.

1.5 Learning Outcome: Organizational Development (OD)
Organizational development is co-related with changes at organizational level. The procedure of implementing changes within the organization is linked OD. The OD is involved in the model of CLM because of having a nature of adopting and implementing changes. The training and development sessions also bring change at individual level, this is why they are also co-related with OD. The vast scope of OD enables the organization to develop a planned strategy to achieve targets and objectives. While OD is responsible for the changes happening at individual and collective level in an organization, the factor of learning contributes a major part towards the organizational development [7]. In many of the

organizations, OD is a planned effort by the managing authorities to implement changes in such a way that the organization profits from it.
In order to develop an effective structure of OD, an organization puts efforts in a long-term because change is not something that can happen instantly. A change at organizational level needs developed plans and proper planning. OD has a positive effect over the management team, organizational vision, process of empowering employees and the process of organization learning [1]. The process of learning and solving the problems which occur during the learning procedures are inseparable parts of organizational development. The structure of organizational development is dependent upon team building, circles of quality and training sessions which are designed to develop a system that is adoptive towards learning and changes brought by learning processes [13]. The focus of this paper has been the model of CLM and how to apply different techniques of CLM to turn an ordinary organization into learning organization. The major focus of CLM is to aid OD because of its effectiveness over the learning processes.

1.6 Theoretical framework for CLM
The process of learning is complicated as there are no parameters to measure and define the process of learning. The focus of this paper is to evaluate whether learning is effected by training and management development programs and how learning process at individual level effects the organization collectively. To evaluate the above two scenarios, it is important to understand if poor training and management development training sessions leave a bad impact over the learning process of organization [5]. The training programs are linked with organization's success so an over view over the success and progress of an organization will give an insight whether the training sessions were effective for organization or not. The integration of success is important as learning within an organization is often confused the concept adoption.
Continuous learning is the process under which employees and organization learn to improve their existing skills and sometimes developing new ones. This is the change which happens under continuous learning process and it must not be confused with adoption as it will distort the concept of learning processes. Cognitive system of an organization for learning is developed by taking behavioral aspects of an organization into consideration [22]. While individual learning is important, it does not mean that individual learning alone is capable of bringing

change in the organization. There is a huge difference between individual and organizational learning. Where individual learning is only concerned with the development of employees' skills, organizational level is linked with development of history, association, cognitive system and memories.
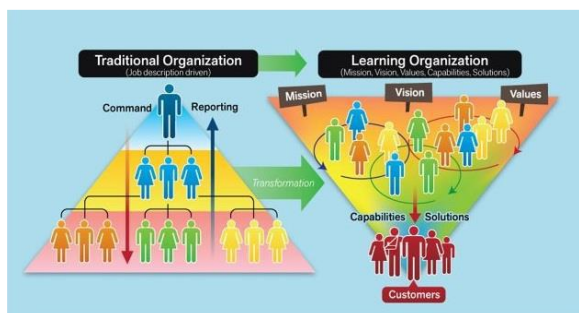
Figure 4: Difference between Learning and Traditional Organization (Source: www. hbr.org)

2. Methodology
A method applied to find out the results of a field study is termed methodology. A research cannot be conducted without having a methodology as it consists of such methods and principles that are helpful in finding out the exact findings of the research.

2.1 Research Design
This paper applies qualitative research method to find out how the CLM model effects Saudi organizations and their process of learning. This research method is exploratory and it is appropriate to apply this approach because of its exploring nature [7]. This research design will provide with the insights into Saudi organizations regarding their learning processes. Observed behavior and interviews are used to collect data from the organizations.

Observed behavior will help in collecting data about the system that is being followed in Saudi organizations. With the application of observed behavior, the whole learning system can be studied closely by observing the behavioral change in employees after the application of learning processes. Conducting interviews will help in collecting data from the employees about the changes in them at individual level. Collectively, application of both these approaches will help in determining changes within the organization at collective as well as individual level.

2.2 Target population

Target population refers to such objects and individuals on which the conclusion and findings of a study are based. The target population of this research is comprised of employees of Saudi organizations. A sample size is selected from the population target for data collection.

2.3 Sampling Technique
Sampling technique refers to method which is applied while choosing a sample size from the population. The sample size is chosen according to the needs and requirements of the research. The basic structure of a methodology is applied on the sample size for the convenient collection of data. This research has used the convenience sampling technique. It is a non-probability sampling technique. This type of sampling uses the first available primary source of data collection. It does not need any additional requirements. Convenience sampling does not include any specifications regarding sample selection prior to the selection of individuals.

2.4 Sample Size
Sample size refers to the measurement of number of individuals or observation which are used in a research for the collection of data. The sample size for this research paper is 10 Saudi organizations that are exercising the process of learning. Employees of these 10 chosen Saudi organizations will be interviewed. Similarly, chosen organizations are observed by applying the observed behavior techniques to closely study the impacts of CLM model.

2.5 Data Collection Tool
Data collection tools refers to those instruments that are used to collect data for further analysis so that the results can be evaluated to draw a final conclusion of the study. Without appropriate data collection tools, data cannot be collected from the sample size. It is important to choose suitable tools so that a bias-free data can be collected conveniently. Interview is selected as the source of data collection. The interviews will be conducted among the employees of the 10 chosen organizations. The interviews will be structured and they will consist of 10 close ended questions. Close ended questions are appropriate approach for this study as they help in collecting unbiased data. It also eliminates the risk of collecting irrelevant details. Whereas open ended questions lead to having a vast data collection with biased and irrelevant details which end up consuming more time than usual. The data collected by closed ended

questions is easy to evaluate because the answers do not contain unnecessary details.

2.6 Data Analysis Tool

Data analysis refers to those instruments which can be used to evaluate the data collected by data collection tools. This study applied content analysis to evaluate the results collected from interviews and observed behavior. The data collected through observed behavior found out that the application of CLM model in Saudi organizations helped in turning the ordinary organizations into learning ones. The various techniques discussed above helped in increasing the pace of learning process. The results from interviews conducted among the employees of chosen organizations suggest that there was a visible change in the behavior of employees after the application of CLM model. The model and trainings involved in the strategies of CLM not only sharpen the existing skills of the employees but it also helped them in developing new skills. The concept of continuous learning when combined with CLM changed the operational activities of organizations and brought positive progress to learning organizations.

3. Conclusion

This paper concludes that application of CLM model within the learning organizations of Saudi Arabia are capable of bringing positive changes within the organization not only at collective level but also at individual level. The model enables employees to learn new techniques about skills improvement to continue the process of learning. This continuous process of learning is the key part of this research. It enables an organization to achieve the goals. CLM comprises of those techniques and strategies that provide an organization with the ability to adopt positive and constructive changes within the organization. The training and development sessions designed as per CLM model, organized for the employees and managers trains them to adopt learning procedures. The whole study strives to prove that the appropriate application of CLM in Saudi organizations is capable of turning them into learning organizations.

Acknowledgement

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